

stand up to the music industry suits?

I did it pre-"Glee," way before it was popular to be out and proud. I used to feel lost and unsure about what I should write about. Once I figured out who I was, my musical mission became clear. Instead of worrying about what people thought, I began to write about everything I was feeling. Instead of keeping those private thoughts locked away in a journal, I brought them forth. They have been some of my best works yet.

"Beautiful" seems to suggest that beauty comes with maturity.

Beauty comes with honesty, most importantly honesty with yourself; the ability to be comfortable in your own skin. In a way, maturity plays a role in this discovery because it is ultimately life's hurdles that point our internal compasses in the right direction.

What do you hope fans take away from your music?

Art is indefinable. I hope my music will allow fans to take whatever they need to from it.

What should fans know about the next generation of emerging musicians?

We represent the future of freedom. We are the freak buried deep within the most conservative mind. That wild animal that erupts only when the lights are off and we are alone. We have to stop giving a shit about what people think. We are a generation of beautifully insane youth. Get ready for the takeover. : :

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— serious issues, no doubt — Bentley says he sees signs of encouragement and improvement across the community.

TOY's relationship with individual schools, teachers, counselors and social workers has been on the incline since the group reached out to middle and high schools across the metro region last year; a grant from the Wesley Mancini Foundation enabled them to send resource pamphlets, an introductory letter and other resources to over 1,000 education professionals.

Bentley also sees progress with other LGBT community groups, many of which have begun to work with TOY and open their doors to participation from young people. Some, Bentley says, are even considering ways to offer youth leadership opportunities.

Bentley says he's excited and looking forward to TOY's several anniversary events, slated for June 10-12.

"We have attempted to create an array of events that both celebrate the history and accomplishments of Time Out Youth and draw attention to the work yet to

be done," he says. "We've combined an opportunity to celebrate and fundraise ... with an opportunity for our community to have a conversation about what is and needs to be." : :

Time Out Youth has planned several events to fete its 20th anniversary.

Gala: A Celebration of 20 Years

June 10, 7:30 p.m.

Extravaganza, 1610 N. Tryon St.

Greatness: Living My Life Like It's Platinum

June 11, noon

Time Out Youth, 1900 The Plaza

Glam: A Time Out Youth Prom

June 11, 8 p.m.

Grand Central, 1000 Central Ave.

Grace: In Every Step

June 12, 9:15 a.m.

Myers Park Baptist, 1900 Queens Rd.

For more detailed information or to purchase tickets, call 704-344-8335 or visit timeoutyouth.org.

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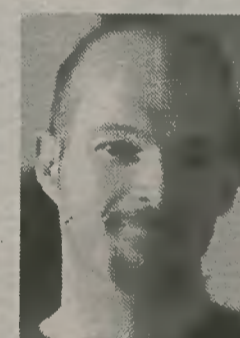
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